

THE 50+ Connection

NEWS and EVENTS from the Howard County
Department of Community Resources and Services

A Publication from the Howard County Office on Aging and Independence

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Ombudsmen Advocate for Vulnerable Older Adults

In Howard County and across the U.S., long-term care ombudsmen are advocates for residents of nursing homes, assisted living and long-term care facilities. Ombudsmen at the Howard County Office on Aging and Independence (OAI) provide information about how to find a facility to meet the needs of a loved one, and what to do to get quality care; they are also trained to resolve problems and investigate complaints about poor or unfair treatment of a vulnerable adult.

Each year on June 15, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day sheds light on the sobering fact that one in 10 Americans over the age of 60 has experienced some form of neglect or abuse – financial, physical, or emotional. Abuse may come from strangers in the form of identity theft or fraudulent schemes; or be the result of neglect from professional caregivers, staff or other residents at long-term-care facilities, or from family members who may be overwhelmed and frustrated from their caregiving role or simply not well enough trained to properly care for their loved one.

Elder abuse affects hundreds of thousands of people each year, yet just one in fourteen cases is brought to the attention of authorities; individuals suffering from cognitive impairment or Alzheimer's Disease are particularly vulnerable. Elder victims tend to be the most isolated of all victims of family violence; they are likely to have fewer social connections to the community that

would normally be an avenue of help. That's one reason the Office on Aging and Independence and its community partners created the Elder Abuse Awareness Guide. The free guide helps individuals, first responders and other professionals throughout the community to recognize the signs, symptoms and types of elder abuse, as well as develop strategies to reduce the incidence of abuse and spread awareness.

The Howard County Police Department also works closely with the Ombudsmen to educate and encourage residents to take a stand against elder abuse, stressing the importance of speaking up and reporting suspected abuse to protect vulnerable older adults throughout Howard County. To learn more about what you can do, visit www.howardcountymd.gov/eldersafety. If you need the assistance of our Howard County Ombudsmen, call 410-313-6423. To report a case of suspected abuse, call 9-1-1.



LGBT Pride Month: Making the Invisible Visible

June is LGBT Pride Month! More than three million Americans age 55 and older identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). Of these, about one in three lives alone; 40 percent note that their support networks have become smaller over time (many LGBT older adults are estranged from their families of origin). In fact, 25 percent will eventually become informal caregivers for other LGBT individuals as they age. LGBT Pride month is celebrated each year in June to shed light on this often-invisible population, and advocate for greater support and resources.

The LGBT Older Adults Task Force of Howard County seeks to improve quality of life for the county's LGBT older adults by decreasing discrimination and social isolation while increasing access to information and resources to promote greater equality. Formed in 2014 in coordination with PFLAG Howard County, the group meets monthly at the Bain 50+ Center in Columbia. According to current Task Force co-chair Jessica Rowe, their ultimate goal is to "make the invisible visible."

"We provide education, information and outreach, share resources, and sponsor community events," says Rowe. Over the past four



years the task force has participated in Howard County's 50+EXPO to reach older LGBT adults, their families and friends; sponsored screenings and discussions of films relevant to LGBT aging issues; held holiday meet and greets for LGBT adults and their friends and families; and worked with assisted living communities in the county to help them provide inclusive, safe and welcoming services to LGBT residents and their families.

Additionally, the LGBT 50+ Group, also held monthly at the Bain 50+ Center, provides an opportunity for LGBT adults 50 years and older to meet for support, education and conversation in a safe, welcoming and confidential setting.

The LGBT Older Adults Task Force maintains a FaceBook page with information about issues related to the local LGBT older adult community (www.Facebook.com/lgbtolderadultsofhoco) as well as group meetings and special events (LGBTQI and Friends 50+ of Howard County). The LGBT 50+ Group is for LGBT adults only; other events and meetings are open to all. Call the Bain 50+ Center at 410-313-7213 (voice/relay) for details about the LGBT 50+ Group, and email lgbthoco@gmail.com for more information about the task force.

Extended Warranties — Smart Coverage or Unnecessary Expense?

By Rebecca Bowman, Administrator, Howard County Office of Consumer Protection

Extended warranties are sold as extra protection for a product if something goes wrong. However, you may be better off saving the money instead of buying that “extended” warranty!

Consider These Factors Before Purchasing an Extended Warranty

- **COST** — The cost of many warranties is often about the same as the cost of repair. For example, the average three-year extended warranty for a dishwasher is \$157.97. The average cost of a dishwasher repair is \$159. In addition, many extended warranties charge a “deductible” each time you make a claim.
- **DURATION** — Many extended warranties go into effect at the same time as the manufacturer’s warranty, not after its expiration. This means you are paying for duplicate coverage during the manufacturer’s warranty period.
- **EXCLUSIONS** — Extended warranties often have long lists of fine print exclusions. For example, some warranties don’t cover repairs to specific parts, while others deny coverage if you don’t perform routine maintenance.
- **REPAIR HASSLES** — Some extended warranties require you to ship your broken product to them for repairs (at your own expense), or only use repair shops that they choose. Even if the warranty company allows you to choose a repair shop, that shop will probably have to get approval before performing the repair. Some repair shops refuse to make repairs if they must be pre-approved.

Options to Research Before Paying for an Extended Warranty

- **CHECK YOUR CREDIT CARD** — some credit cards extend the manufacturer’s warranty on products purchased with that card by a year or more.
- **EXERCISE IMPLIED WARRANTIES** — Under Maryland’s “implied warranty of merchantability,” products must be fit for their ordinary purpose. A “warranty of fitness for a particular purpose” is implied if a seller tells you that a product will perform in a specific way. If a product doesn’t work, take it back to the retailer even if there’s a notice that says you can’t.
- **CREATE A PERSONAL RSA (REPAIR SAVINGS ACCOUNT)** — Deposit the cost of an extended warranty into a “repair or replace savings account” and only use the funds when the product(s) need repair.

For more information on this and other consumer topics or to obtain this factsheet in an alternative format, call the Office of Consumer Protection at 410-313-6420 (voice/relay), email consumer@howardcountymd.gov, or visit www.howardcountymd.gov/consumer.

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www.facebook.com/HoCoCommunity



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P4C Pet Evaluations

If you are interested in volunteering, or wish to receive a FREE evaluation for your pet, contact:

Ingrid Gleysteen, PROGRAM COORDINATOR
igleysteen@howardcountymd.gov
410-313-7461 (voice/relay)

June 7 • 7:00 TO 9:00 PM

Bain 50+ Center, 5470 Ruth Keeton Way, Columbia 21044



Positive Thinking – A Path to Happiness

Monday, June 4 • 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Elkridge 50+ Center

6540 Washington Blvd., Elkridge 21075

Join **SeniorsTogether** facilitator Mary Pat Donelan, as she presents ideas on how to change our attitudes and actions to reap the benefits of positive thinking on our health. A follow-up group will meet to discuss additional ways to make positive thinking a daily practice and help support one another. FREE

To register, contact Karen Hull at 410-313-7466 (voice/relay) or khull@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov/sentog

SHIP Team Receives Governor's Service Award



The Howard County Office on Aging and Independence's State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) staff and volunteers received an outstanding customer service award from Governor Larry Hogan for their outreach efforts to help answer questions about Medicare-related insurance issues and explain options for health insurance. The Governor's Citation was presented "as an expression of our great respect and appreciation for the commitment and service you have provided to our citizens." Congratulations! If you need help with a Medicare issue, contact SHIP at 410-313-7392 (voice/relay).

REUSE • RECYCLE • REPURPOSE • REUSE • RECYCLE • REPURPOSE • REUSE • RECYCLE • REPURPOSE • REUSE • RECYCLE

Resources for Aging in Place at the Loan Closet

By appointment Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday • 9:00 AM TO 4:00 PM
Monday and Friday appointments are limited and as available.
The office is CLOSED every weekday between noon and 1:00 p.m.
Please call ahead to **CHECK EQUIPMENT AVAILABILITY**
and **SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT** with a specialist.

►► **NOTE: ALL EQUIPMENT REQUIRES A REFERRAL** from
an Allied Health Care Professional (PT, OT or MD).
See additional requirement details at right.

The **Loan Closet** is a local clearinghouse of donated medical equipment — for those who cannot afford these items or simply have a short-term need, as well as those who may no longer need their equipment.

The **Loan Closet** provides and accepts:

- Bathing Aids • Canes • Ramps • Shower Aids • Therapy Aids
- Toilet Aids • Walkers • Wheelchairs • *and much more!*

Additional Program Requirements

- No appointment necessary for equipment donations and returns, which are accepted Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to noon; and 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
- Client or caregiver must be a Howard County resident and be able to independently load/unload equipment in/out of their vehicle.
- Manual/transport wheelchairs are available for 30 days, but may be extended upon request.
- Delivery of equipment or pick up of donations is available on a limited basis by volunteers.
- Equipment referral forms are available online at www.howardcountymd.gov/loancloset. Completed forms may be scanned and submitted via email to loancloset@howardcountymd.gov or faxed to 410-313-0369.



Howard County Office on
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Department of Community Resources and Services

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To join our subscriber list, email kahenry@howardcountymd.gov

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Equipment and Resources for Aging in Place

Long Reach Village Center, 8775 Cloudleap Court, Suite #11
Columbia, MD 21045 • loancloset@howardcountymd.gov
410-313-0363 (VOICE/RELAY) • 410-313-0369 (FAX)

www.howardcountymd.gov/loancloset

The Loan Closet is a Howard County Office on Aging and Independence program in collaboration with Rebuilding Together of Howard County; Rotary Club of Columbia; and the Way Station.

Financial contributions are appreciated; all monetary donations are to be made payable to the Director of Finance, Howard County.

Howard County 50+ Centers SPOTLIGHT ON THE NORTH LAUREL 50+ CENTER

www.howardcountymd.gov/50pluscenters for all 50+ Center events

From Small Beginnings to a Bright Future

By Trisha Olsen, Director, North Laurel 50+ Center

It took 20 years to cobble together the many small pieces of land that has become the site of the North Laurel Community Center (NLCC). Today, the building is home to the North Laurel 50+ Center, a Connections Social Day Program and Kindred Spirits (see below); the facility also houses Recreation and Parks programs, a County police sub-station and a branch of the Health Department. The Office on Aging and Independence programs offered at North Laurel started out small as well. In June 2011, what was once known as the Savage Senior Center — a one-room operation at the former Savage Library — was relocated to the new 55,000 square foot community center building to become the North Laurel 50+ Center, along with the former Owen Brown Senior Center Plus (now the Connections Program). NLCC's bright expansive spaces include a full-sized gym, fitness room, computer lab, dance and art studios, indoor walking track, and more. During the week, our 50+ center members can be found using treadmills, learning new technology apps, taking salsa lessons or learning how to glaze a ceramic bowl.

Volunteer and mentoring opportunities abound at the North Laurel 50+ Center. The original vision started with three high school students placed for career exploration and one older adult who assisted with the lunch program. Today, there are a multitude of options for volunteers of any age to be engaged, thanks in part to our expanded community partnerships. To date, over 75 volunteers have shared their time, skills and knowledge at North Laurel.

North Laurel offers older adults ways to better manage their health by offering classes in nutrition, meditation, yoga, body toning and balance. Members also engage in the arts with workshops, monthly concerts, social dances and live performances. Our partnerships extend into the schools, as well; members and students share oral histories, musical and dance performances and craft projects.

Situated on 40 acres of parkland with an abundance of natural light, NLCC provides a canvas of unlimited possibilities for arts programming. One of our newer yet popular initiatives is the Mosaic Project, a collaborative effort with the American Visionary Arts Museum (AVAM). Older adults have joined AVAM artists to create two permanent mosaic installations in the center: *Roots and Branches* (2016) and *Constellation* (2017), pictured above. The 2018 project — *The Exquisite Us* — is a visual exploration of the way personality, intentional design, and chance processes unite seemingly disparate parts; the unveiling and reception will be held at NLCC on Friday, June 8 from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.



Looking to the future, Howard County plans to add an Aquatics Center to NLCC in 2020, including an eight-lane lap pool and a zero-entry pool. Access to the swim center will be included in the GO50+ Fitness Pass to provide recreational swim opportunities for older adults, their grandchildren and the community.

Stop by and enjoy all the North Laurel 50+ Center has to offer! For more information, visit us at 9411 Whiskey Bottom Road in Laurel, visit www.howardcountymd.gov/50pluscenters or call 410-313-0380.



Providing socialization, companionship, support, education, and a sense of purpose in a safe and nurturing environment.

Kindred Spirits at North Laurel
Tuesdays and Thursdays • 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

North Laurel 50+ Center
9411 Whiskey Bottom Road, Laurel 20723

Nancy Riley, Director • 410-313-7218 (VOICE/RELAY)
EMAIL nriley@howardcountymd.gov



For adults 18 and over, this specialized program is specifically designed to maintain independence, enhance memory and improve the overall health of participants.

**Connections Social
Day Program at North Laurel**

Monday through Friday • 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

North Laurel 50+ Center
9411 Whiskey Bottom Road, Laurel 20723

Nancy Riley, Director • 410-313-7218 (VOICE/RELAY)
EMAIL nriley@howardcountymd.gov

A daily fee covers all program costs, trips, snacks and lunch; a sliding fee scale is available to Howard County residents.